



Memorandum

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission **FROM:** Courtney Damkroger

SUBJECT: Japantown Historic Context and Reconnaissance Level Survey **DATE:** April 22, 2004

In late 2003, the City of San Jose, the historic district committee of the Japantown Community Congress and Stephen Polcyn, Vice Chair of the Commission, selected Carey & Co. to conduct the Context and Survey project. The consultant team began its work in January and will join the Historic Landmarks Commission at the May meeting to give a brief overview of the project and to discuss their work to date. A map of the survey area is attached as well as an outline of the project scope and schedule.

The City of San Jose and its Historic Landmarks Commission were awarded a \$5,000 Certified Local Government grant in 2003 to help support the costs of the Japantown Context and Survey project. The remainder of the project costs will be provided by \$5,000 from the local community and \$40,000 of City funds derived from settlement funds from unpermitted historic building demolitions.

Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

Attachments: Project Scope and Schedule
Survey Area Map

JAPANTOWN HISTORIC CONTEXT AND RECONNAISSANCE LEVEL SURVEY

PROJECT SCOPE:

The City of San Jose and its Historic Landmarks Commission propose to develop a historic context within the scope of a reconnaissance level survey of San Jose's Japantown area. The proposed project is particularly timely given recent state legislation and funding directed toward California's three remaining Japantowns as well as developments in San Jose's own Japantown. As a result of SB307, the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project, San Jose's Japantown organized a Community Congress which is now incorporated as a nonprofit entity. The organization represents a wide variety of stakeholders and includes numerous committees organized to address specific needs. The Congress formed a historic district committee to study the pros and cons of pursuing historic district designation on the local, state and national levels. The development of the CLG grant application is in response to those community interests. In addition, Congress members stated their preference to use a portion of the Proposition 40 Cultural Heritage Grant funds directed to California's Japantowns as a partial match for the survey project.

The project will be conducted with the assistance of a contracted preservation planning and survey professionals meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The consultant and the project team will rely heavily on the community itself as a source of information and assistance in development of the context. Local community groups, such as the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, will play a fundamental role in the process. The survey and context will document significant buildings, sites, structures and objects, connecting them to the rich history of the neighborhood.

While the proposed project is timely given the recent funding, legislation and community organizing, it is also timely given the need to protect the resources that make up the community. Historic resources in Japantown are not always readily apparent as significant historic sites; they may be modest, hidden, even altered but are nonetheless vital parts that comprise the whole. The context and reconnaissance survey project will help identify, raise awareness about and ultimately protect these community resources.

While the proposed survey and context project would include a definition of survey and potential district boundaries, Japantown is generally bounded by North First Street on the west, East Taylor Street on the north; North 10th Street on the east and East Empire Street on the south. While East Taylor Street is a major commercial street, Jackson Street between Third and Seventh is the primary business area of historic Japantown. Industrial uses are located to the east and residential areas are north and south of East Taylor Street. Japantown is approximately one mile north of the downtown core.

Japantown is made up of residential, commercial and industrial areas that date from the late nineteenth century through the 1950s and to the present. The Kuwabara Hospital (Issei Memorial Building) and a cannery are the only City Landmarks in the area. In 1991 –1992 a thematic, reconnaissance level, Transportation and Communication survey was conducted in the City and included seventeen sites in Japantown that potentially contribute to a "Chinese/Japanese City Landmark District." These resources range from the modest Nishimura Butcher to a former schoolhouse reused as midwifery, then a dentist office and now as housing. San Jose's Heinlenville Chinatown site (now currently built over by the City's Corporation Yard), dating to the late nineteenth century, overlaps the eastern portion of Japantown. The 1991-1992 survey recommendations included the need to provide additional research of these buildings (at the intensive level) and to develop "a contextual statement tracing the history and development of the

area...analysis of ... appropriate district boundaries, and the identification of all contributing structures and their ethnic associations and functions.” It is important to note that this survey did not evaluate all potentially significant resources in the area, only those that contributed to the thematic reconnaissance level survey, and that no survey work has been done in the area since that time.

The project is fundamentally community based. In Japantown where there are concerns about protecting cultural resources and the complex character of the community as well as concerns about government intervention and the need to balance private property rights, community direction and participation are essential for a well-developed context and reconnaissance level survey. The consultant will conduct archival research of primary and secondary resources as well as oral histories and interviews to develop the context. The reconnaissance level survey will include Primary Records and associated photography. The context will be refined following the survey work. The final products will include Primary Records, a final draft Historic Context and records from the oral interviews in bound format with copies distributed to the Japanese American Museum of San Jose and area archives. It is anticipated that upon completion of this project a Phase II project would be developed to include an intensive level survey that may be followed by local and National Register district nominations.

PRODUCTS:

The products of this Japantown Reconnaissance Survey and Historic Context Development will be:

- Project narrative of findings, including methodology, bibliography and recommendations for next steps in a bound report format
- Development of a historic context for the Japantown area including other ethnic populations
- Map of the reconnaissance level survey area with surveyed parcels indicated
- Preliminary definition of potential historic district boundaries in map form
- Table of buildings surveyed at the reconnaissance level including address, Assessor Parcel Number, resource name (if any), and any prior survey evaluation
- Department of Parks and Recreation 523 A forms (Primary Records) with photographs
- Summaries of any oral interviews. Transcripts/records from any oral history would be donated to the Museum.

ADMINISTRATION

Members of the survey committee:

- Leslie Masunaga, Co-Chair, Historic District Committee of Japantown Community Congress
- James McClure, Co-Chair, Historic District Committee of Japantown Community Congress
- Kathy Sakamoto, Director, Japantown Business Association
- Stephen Polcyn, Vice Chair, San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission
- Julie Amato, San Jose Redevelopment Agency
- Courtney Damkroger, San Jose Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement

SCHEDULE:

1. **Request for Proposals (RFP)** July -September 2003
 - Prepare RFP and list of qualified consultants

- Mail and publish RFP
- Prepare contract
- Review proposals
- Interview consultants

2. Select Consultant

October-November 2003

- Select consultant and execute contract

3. Work Program Development & Research

December 2003 – February 2004

- Attend Community Congress meeting to share plans for survey and historic context development, solicit input and volunteers
- Survey committee to identify sources for first round of oral interviews (residents, business and property owners, academics, authors, religious community) and identify other ethnic groups/associations for oral interviews and research needs
- Conduct archival research on history and prehistory of Japantown neighborhood
- Collect and review previous historic resource survey work, historic reports, City-sponsored plans for Japantown
- Research original source material at Japanese American Museum of San Jose collections
- Identify additional archival sources
- Conduct first round of oral history interviews and identify additional sources for oral interviews

4. Historic Context Development/Conduct Initial Reconnaissance Survey

March - May 2004

- Begin initial survey work
- Prepare historic context to define development patterns
- Attend Historic Landmarks Commission meeting to provide update on context and survey

5. Prepare and Review Reconnaissance Survey Data

June - July 2004

- Organize survey data
- Define potential historic district boundaries
- Refine historic context based on data
- Share draft historic context with Community Congress

6. Final Review and Products

August – September 2004

- Final draft report (historic context, Primary Records, maps, matrices)
- Attend Historic Landmarks Commission meeting to review final draft
- Submit Final Report to the Office of Historic Preservation
- Distribute final product to Japanese American Museum of San Jose and area archives